

4th March, 1968



My dear Shirley Anne,

The sight of a distant sail could not have reminded the sailor marooned on a desert isle more vividly than your letter did me that the vital, throbbing, bustling world is still there and I remain part of it. Such is the evocative power of a simple sheet of paper containing a few marks. And so I have eventually received (on the 23rd February) your eagerly awaited letter (posted in Durban on the 30th January and received at Robben Island on the 2nd February).

As, sitting here, I read your letter, a flood of nostalgic memories swirls around me. I am back once again in Hyde Park, coming down the hill to the Serpentine from the direction of Marble Arch. Ahead of me I see a slim wind-blown figure being hurried along at the end of a leash (!) towards the boathouse. I feel sure I know her. But dog and owner veer to the right and are lost in the milling throng. No matter; our paths will cross again. Many an hour have I spent rowing on the Serpentine. I recall a pair of swans - are they still there? Those creatures, aloof, disdainful and oh! so beautiful! Still fresh in my mind is the amazing sight of dense swarms of people converging into Hyde Park on a Sunday morning in Spring when the unpredictable sun thrusting aside the clouds through which he burst forth chose to reveal his radiant smile for a while. Lucky Londoners! You also have the colourful splendour of Regents Park and the rustic placidity of Hampstead Heath!

During the years before I qualified at Lincoln's Inn, the times I frequently spent at these (and other) places were never enough for me.

Let me now return to the present. I had originally intended to do a B.A. (Hons.) in Political Science. But my arrival here was followed by a ban on post-graduate courses. It now appears that foreign languages and some other undergraduate courses have also fallen under the axe (e.g. law subjects, political science, etc). The full picture is not yet clear. Hence I am now doing the B.Com. My subjects this year are Business Economics, Accounting and Maths (which if I had more sense and less pig-headedness I would have abandoned in favour of a less exacting and more easily realisable subject). I hope to major in Business Economics (micro-economics) and Economics (macro-economics). Perhaps I

will. And if all goes well, I will also do Economic History. As you can guess, my environment is not exactly suitable for academic pursuits; moreover, conditions may be regarded as somewhat unfavourable. It is indeed a discipline for the hard-labouring, demure-nourished, part-timer whose hours of study must not extend beyond 11 p.m.!

Then there is the problem of books. Some may be borrowed from the University library (a few at a time). But this is a time-consuming process in my situation - a library book (if approved by the prison censor) can be received just a few days before an exam (months after it is applied for). In the result, most books have to be purchased (though here too there can be delay) provided they are expressly recommended or referred to in the lectures, etc., and subject further to approval in each case by the prison censor. Thus supply is severely circumscribed but at optimum cost. I consider the question of studies to be of the utmost importance. My fervent hope is that studies do not have to be curtailed or abandoned because of money difficulties.

The weather here is now changing. The cold nights (Benquetá currents) are arriving earlier and earlier and leaving later each succeeding morning. The harsh sun is becoming steadily less scorching and thus less scorching for the lesser day. It is the afternoon of our year when the tired day invites tiring people, who look forward with stubborn reluctance and brutish dread, to lay down their outworn tools and retire into the long night. For, when it comes, who knows what the new dawn will disclose.

You over there are presently witnessing, now here now there, the new life of a new morning, the fresh painful-pleasant birth of the living, the rejuvenation of the eternally young. How right you are when you say that life is deathless! And how unthinkable beyond death is the matchless and indomitable spirit of man - man the most miraculous of all miracles!

There is much in my heart and more in my head that must remain where it is for now.

My love to you both.

As ever,

M.D.

Received
2/4/68
M.D.